



## 3 Cheese Cocktails You Will Love

I am a fan of a savory cocktail. I like my martinis with luscious texture and underlying umami offset by sharp, salty garnishes—not so much dirty, as full-bodied, multilayered. I found my sip by putting cheese in my drinks. A tangy chèvre, a funky blue, or a briny feta adds just the dimension I want for a complex elixir with a velvety mouthfeel.

Utilizing cheese in cocktails has been called pricey and difficult, with equipment like foamers and misters necessary to whip a solid dairy product into drinkable form. But, honestly, it doesn't have to be that hard. If you're using a soft, crumbly cheese that falls apart easily, there's really nothing complicated about making an infusion, and a little bit of cheese goes a long way, so it doesn't have to be expensive. Plus, for cheeses packed in brine, what normally would be a throwaway ingredient adds lusciousness and lip-smacking salinity.

Especially if you're eating foods that include the cheese you've used in the drink, or a common accompaniment to it such as charcuterie or salad, these cocktails pair well with snacks. But they're also like sippable meals themselves, so you don't need to make them too big to be satisfying. Here are the three cheeses used in standout cocktail recipes sourced from pros that are easy to execute at home.

### FETA CHEESE COCKTAIL: DIRTY FETA MARTINI

Greece's only craft vodka distilled from Greek olives, [Kástra Elión](#) is the brainchild of master distiller Frank Mihalopoulos, who grew up in Nafpaktos, on the Gulf of Corinth.

The town is set in the shadow of an enormous castle, which is the vodka's namesake, and surrounded by olive groves. Mihalopoulos grew up eating those olives, three varieties of which infuse the wheat-based mash for the vodka, bringing an oily richness and a subtle herbaceousness. "You get all the umami, saltiness, and texture, without it being an olive-flavored vodka," says Rafael Reyes, director of strategy and commercial sales for Kástra Elión. "When you drink it neat, you perceive extra mouthfeel, and when you have it in a martini, the olives add another layer."

In 2020, when Kástra Elión launched in the States, Reyes sent out dirty martini kits that included the vodka, some feta-stuffed olives, and a compound brine from both olives and feta cheese, sans the vermouth. "The traditional classic martini always has vermouth to soften the drink and add a layer of the botanicals," says Reyes, but in this case, the cheese brings the softening. As brines tend to do when shaken, this one opens right up in the glass. "You add the feta-olive brine, and you're getting the freshness of the cheese and saltiness of olive, and it makes you have another sip."

Though you can buy olives already stuffed with feta, for the best flavor, visit your local Greek market. Purchase feta in brine and a jar of olives, and stuff your own olives. "The cheese tends to not travel well, so if you stuff them yourself, the consistency of the cheese and its characteristics express themselves a little bit better," says Reyes. Then blend the brine from the pitted olives with the brine from the cheese. You'll end up with a luxurious drink that speaks of the provenance of its ingredients.

"We wanted something unique with the character to add another layer to your martini. You're getting some of the olive, some of the cheese; it's not just one note. You taste more as it evolves," explains Reyes. "Plus, the feta helps bring you a little bit of Greece."

## DIRTY FETA MARTINI

2½ oz vodka, preferably Kástra Elión

¾ oz equal parts feta and olive brine

1 cube feta

1 pitted green olive, such as Halkidiki or another Greek variety

Combine the vodka and brine in an ice-filled cocktail shaker, give it a good shake, and strain it into a 4-oz martini glass. Stuff the feta into the olive and drop it into the drink.

